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THE GREY VALLEY

NICHOLAS DRAKE





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THE GREY VALLEY

BY

NICHOLAS DRAKE

1921



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NICHOLAS DRAKE



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I dedicate this little book
to my
Father and Mother

FOREWORD

The poems contained in this little volume, with a few exceptions, have previously appeared in *The Times-Dispatch*, or in *The Richmond Evening Journal*. Therefore, I have set aside this page for the purpose of thanking Mr. S. T. Clover, the former editor of *The Journal*, and Mr. H. E. Warner, of *The Times-Dispatch*, for their many courtesies.

NICHOLAS DRAKE.

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THE GREY VALLEY



His Voice

In sunset glow and in each gleam
The stars portray at night,
In every ripple of the stream
That leaps to greet the sight,
And in the petals of the rose
Which nestles by the thorn
There is a Voice which swells and flows
To souls of men reborn.

They understand, the sons of man,
And sons of God become,
When turning from the sordid plan
They hear in summer's hum
The Voice which spoke in Galilee,
Which told of life and love:
For sights and sounds on land and sea
Are words from God above.

The House Is Still

Aye, they have all gone to bed,
The house is dark and still,
And their thoughts of day have fled
Away and o'er the hill—
O'er the hill of dusky gray
That into valleys fold,
To the place where children play
Who now are nearly old.

Yes, they have all gone to bed,
The men who once were boys—
And, perhaps, again they tread
The field of youthful joys,
And the frowzy pup leads on
To Staple's swimmin' hole,
Where no fancy garb is worn
When leaping from the knoll.

Aye, they have all gone to bed,
The house is dark and drear—
But they list to sounds long dead
That rise again in air,
And someone mayhap, is seen
As she stands near the door
Of the gabled house of green
Where once they lived of yore.

Where Fancy Lives

When night's bleak frost is in the air,
And luna's sheen is bright and cold,
I think no more of daily care,
Nor feel the grip of toil's hold;
For then I dream the dreams God gives
To souls of men of work and play
Who seek the place where Fancy lives
On dusty shelves midst shadows gray.

Give me a book and quiet nook
And fast I'll sail for old Cathay—
Then on I'll go and gently look
Upon the maids of Mandalay.
As gales from north lands outside blow
Give me a stirring tale at home
And o'er the snow I'll gaily go
E'en though I trek my way to Nome.

His Scraggy Dog

The old, old mutt, the scraggy dog
He left when he went away
Goes the round of the old-time haunts—
From the church to dance hall gay.

While merry throngs pass by, he stands
With his head hung down, forlorn,
And seems to say in doggish way,
“My master and god is gone.”

A whistle he hears in the night
That seems as his comrade's call,
Yet, still it lacks a note he knows,
So back goes he to his stall.

But he will find the one he seeks
There, perhaps, in Realms of Right,
When answers he the call he knows,
As it comes through gates of light.

From the Dead

You are the dead; we are the souls who live!
O, comrades, save thy tears, thy laughter give—
Tomorrow thou and I again shall tread
The fields we love—but not among the dead!
For life is mine, and I before thee stand
A friend and leader to a better land.

They say we died; let this now be thy trust:
The body's evil only turns to dust!
Among the clouds of white and by thy side
Live those who drink of life—the men who've died!
So dry thine eyes, ye who are still in pain,
And keep the faith, for we shall meet again.

Song-Thrush

Often I've heard the mavis-bird
Singing the sweetest lay,
Yet when I hear again each year
His happy song of May
My spirit fills with new-born thrills
And free I feel and gay.

I love the rare enchanting air
Pandean-pipes now play,
And every tale told in the vale
In memory-mine shall stay—
But heard o'er all is the clear love call
The mavis chants today.

The Old Man

They saw not the smile within, nor the fire
That burned behind his lusterless gray eyes;
They only saw his age, his tattered garb,
His battered hat and worn-out, shineless shoes;
And when he passed the door they pitied him.
I wonder why it was he pitied them?

Easter

The earth's bright carpet now is down
And zephyrs sweep it clean,
While overhead the tree tops spread
Their gowns of tinted green;
With rhythmic notes the air is filled
As nature croons and hums—
And pixies dance o'er earth's expanse
When Spring's sweet spirit comes.

How well the season fits the day
When He from death arose,
And found the clime of life sublime,
Free from all worldly woes.
Because of Him all fears are stilled,
Golgotha now is past,
For visions bright of lands of light
Belong to us at last.

Throbbing of the Funeral Drums

Another hero dead? Another

Soul fled from earth?

Dead? No!

His soul still lives, and

To us gives new strength

To meet the foe.

Back of the firing-line,

Back of the struggle comes

The sobbing and throbbing

Of the funeral drums.

Ah, mothers, those sons of you born,

Do they seem from you forever shorn?

You know they are not lost, but still

You murmur, "Gone."

Though it is miles away, she sees

The procession as it comes,

And she hears the sobbing and throbbing

Of the funeral drums.

I try to comfort her

And her pain to allay,

And she hears me not,

Yet she hears far away

The sobbing and throbbing

Of the funeral drums.

Looking Forward

Lift thine eyes, O, World,
From ashes and from dust;
Behold the flag unfurled
In which the nations trust,
God will be our guide,
To lead to pastures fair,
We know He will provide
For us His children there.

Sheathed is now the sword,
No more we view the night;
Wreathed are the graves, O, Lord,
We see the future bright.
The grim past now is dead
And there beyond the tears,
Caused by the fields dyed red,
Rise blessed future years.

First Flowers: From a Persian Myth

When Ahura-Mazdao
Directed man to cut
The breast of Earth loud cries
Arose to the angels
Asking intercession
For Armati, goddess
Of the Earth and giver
Of increase; but knowing
The Almighty wisdom
Of Ahura-Mazdao,
The Omnipotent God,
The Giver of All Life,
His glorious angels
Sorrowfully refused.
Yet Ahura-Mazdao,
Seeing the pain of Earth,
Hearing Armati in
Anguish, determined to
Compensate her, though He
Would not alleviate
Her pain, as men must raise
Food by plowing the ground;
Therefore, He took perfume
From the pots of incense
That ever in heaven
Burn—which gives forth sweet smells—
And, combined with carmine
Taken from the setting
Sun, made a wondrous work
Named Flowers, and gave to
Suffering Armati,
Who, smiling through her tears,
Clasped them to her bosom.

Life's Pictures

When life's pictures are painted
And the last touches made,
When we have toned the high lights
And brightened all the shade,
Will the good, loving Master
Judge each work side by side?
Or will He merely rule by
How hard the painter tried?

Will He value each painting
By the size of the frame?
And before passing judgment
Look for the painter's name?
Or will He judge each painting,
Will He the worth decide,
By how well it is finished and
How hard the painter tried?

Summer's Eve

The hills that rise against the skies
God's altars are and free,
While swaying trees are praying trees,
All bending reverently;
And the notes heard from each wild bird
Songs are divine in praise,
Pulsing in air with that hymn rare
The brook forever plays.

All nature sings of greater things
Than those which mankind sees,
For fancy's flight, too great for sight,
Leaps to angelic keys;
And he who hears the song of years
On rippling nights in June,
Up from the sod to greet his God
Rises with soul in tune.

Children's Time

Christmas is for children,
As often has been said,
And all the decorations
So gay, of green and red,
Are just to greet Saint Nick,
Who brings the children toys,
And nothing means to us—
The grown-up girls and boys!

Children's time, children's time,
O, surely 'tis the truth;
It is just the time of times
For carefree, singing youth.
So let's put old age out,
While bringing in the toys,
And let us sing today,
And just be girls and boys.

On Easter Morn

This morn saw I pass slowly by
A bier black as very night—
No soul save I and a passerby
Saw the grim and ghastly sight.

Turning, asked I of the passerby,
“Why are no tears this morn shed
For him who lies with vacant eyes
Yonder, cold and dead?”

The passerby to me drew nigh
And smiled as He clearly said:
“Why should tears fall upon the pall?
There Death lies dead.”

Asrael

Last night a beautiful
Angel hovered o'er me
In my dreams. Within his
Hand he held a goblet
Of gold, and his waist was
Encircled by a small
Girdle with a phoenix
Embroidered upon it.
My imagination
Had never conceived the
Thought before there was such
A wonderful being,
Even in realms above;
Though often I pondered
About the land beyond—
Of Elysium I
Incessantly thought—yet
The fairest thought of mine
Could not match the fairness
Of the angel standing
Before me . . . I questioned
Him, "Who art thou?" And the
Spirit answered, saying,
"I am Asrael, the
Angel of Death." Surprised,
This beautiful soul was
None other than the hard,
Grim Reaper. Again spake
I: "Then why come ye as
One who brings hope and life?"

Is this disguise meant for
An evil purpose of
Thine? The cup of gold is
Filled with a bitter drink
Which takes the life of man,
Perhaps." But he replied,
"The golden vessel that
I have contains precious
Elixir." I pondered
Awhile this strange speech of
His . . . Then truth came to me,
I cried, "Thou, Asrael
Art the Angel of Life!"

Faith

Sitting on yon bare tree
Sings the gay opechee,
Thinking not of sorrow,
Nor of snows of morrow,
Thinking of life and love,
 Singing there, without care,
On the bough above.

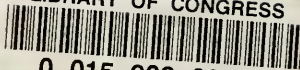
Little bird, you shame me,
With faith you inflame me,
Today, I, too, shall sing,
Forgetting everything,
Excepting life and love,
 For His arm saves from harm
Those who look above.

The Thoroughbred

When the cur is spent and torn
He will whimper, beg and moan,
 And he will lie on his back on the ground;
But the thoroughbred doesn't know
When he is licked by a foe,
 And he will stand till the end of the round.

So, when you're bruised and you're worn
It will take nerve to keep on—
 But that is the test of a thoroughbred;
And they will say you have grit
If you don't grumble and quit—
 If you don't lie down—until you are dead!

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